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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NEW DELHI 006340

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [KCRM](#) [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [IN](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: MEA: TURN UP THE HEAT ON THE LTTE

REF: A. COLOMBO 1425

[B](#). COLOMBO 1417

Classified By: PolCouns Geoff Pyatt, for Reasons 1.4 (B, D)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: The GOI was saddened but not surprised by the August 12 assassination of Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar -- apparently by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) -- because he, as a moderate Tamil, was considered the LTTE's second-most important target after President Chandrika Kumaratunga. Sri Lanka's Tamil minority needs a "credible, moderate voice" to push their political agenda without resorting to the brutal terrorism that has been the hallmark of the LTTE, according to the MEA Deputy Secretary (Sri Lanka). He prescribed a three-part response

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to this latest atrocity: unequivocal condemnation of the LTTE's "methods and objectives," cooperation on drying up LTTE fundraising among the Tamil diaspora in the West, and persuading the governments of countries that host the Tamil diaspora to take a tougher line against the LTTE. End Summary.

Assassination "Not Unexpected"

[1](#)2. (C) MEA Deputy Secretary (Sri Lanka) Anupam Ray on August 16 told Poloff that the assassination of Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar was regrettable "but not unexpected ... he was the second target only after President Kumaratunga." Ray explained that Kadirgamar, as an ethnic Tamil, was an effective spokesman against the LTTE and helped the GOSL paint the LTTE as a terrorist organization. He lamented that the attack, which took place in Kadirgamar's home (Ref B), revealed "a terrible failure of routine security." (NOTE: The MEA was busy supporting the Colombo travel of Foreign Minister Natwar Singh and preparing for the arrival later that day of Sri Lankan Opposition Leader Ranil Wickremesinghe. End Note.)

[1](#)3. (C) What puzzled Ray most was the timing of the attack. "Colombo was acceding to all the demands, even giving a better deal than the LTTE was asking for," Ray expounded. "Kumaratunga will probably lose her job after this, unless she is assassinated, too," he concluded, noting that Kadirgamar's death came after the GOSL made numerous concessions to the LTTE. So far the MEA has declined to name the LTTE specifically in its public statements. On August 13, the MEA spokesman called the assassination "a heinous act and we condemn it unreservedly." Spokesman Sarna added that India's support for the unity and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka remained "constant and undiluted."

"A Blow to India" and the Peace Process

[1](#)4. (C) Professor Ajay Behera of Delhi's Centre for Policy Research called the assassination "a blow to India" because Kadirgamar has long been considered an excellent friend of India. Behera was also concerned the attack would force the GOSL to end the cease-fire and that Colombo would have a hard time carrying the peace process forward despite their stated desire to do so (Ref A).

Tamils Need a "Credible, Moderate Voice"

[1](#)5. (C) After referring to the ethnic conflict between Sri Lanka's Sinhalese majority and Tamil minority as "Balkan in its length and its brutality," Ray opined that the Tamil people need a "credible, moderate voice" to compete with the LTTE. He admitted that the Tamils have legitimate grievances, but counseled that the country must remain undivided. The worst outcome, Ray added, would be a unilateral declaration of independence (UDI), which he said he could not rule out: "A UDI would be a disaster," he predicted, since it would lead both sides to escalate violence.

Next Steps: Condemnation, Cash Starvation, Persuasion

[1](#)6. (C) When asked what the international response to this terrorist attack should be, MEA's Ray had three recommendations:

-- Public condemnation of all LTTE methods and objectives, including but not strictly limited to the assassination.  
"This is a Stalinist organization, the donor countries need to start treating it like one. You need to decide if they are a terrorist group or freedom fighters."  
-- Examining and interdicting LTTE funding from the Tamil diaspora. "They have a navy and an air force, purchased with funds from Tamils living in Canada, Norway, Germany, Switzerland, Australia, and the UK."

-- Persuading these countries to ramp up the pressure on LTTE publications, recruitment, and other activities as well.  
"They need to hold the LTTE accountable," Ray averred, singling out Canada for "not doing anything."

17. (C) Ray shared his own theory -- which he admitted had no firm intelligence to confirm -- that the LTTE and Indian Naxalite terrorists might be cooperating on IED design and training. (Consulate Chennai Comment: Our sources have not confirmed this either although it is widely believed that the LTTE and the Naxalites have shared knowledge and training in the past. End Comment.)

Comment: No New Thinking Yet in Delhi  
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18. (C) The MEA Sri Lanka desk appeared to be distracted by the assassination itself, FM Singh's travel to Colombo for the funeral, the Wickremesinghe visit, and recent personnel moves, and was not yet as focused on the need for a coordinated response as it was after the King's coup in Nepal last February. However, the MEA, with its tight focus on curbing the Tamil diaspora living in the West, was at least prepared with an off-the-shelf message.  
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